

# Editorial director appointed by McGoff

John P. McGoff, president and chief executive officer of Panax Corporation, has appointed James R. Whelan as editorial director of the company's newspapers.

At the same time, McGoff said Whelan had been elected a vicepresident of the corporation at the July 25 meeting of the company's Board of Directors.

"We are committed at Panax," McGoff said, "to publishing the finest newspapers of our size in America, newspapers with a strong and vigorous editorial personality. We have conducted a nationwide search, lasting several months, to find the right person to give us the leadership to reach those goals."

"We are confident that Mr. Whelan is that person, because of his record of accomplishment as a reporter, writer, and editor, at the local, national and international levels, because those skills were tempered and broadened by exposure as a business executive and as a publisher, and because of his personal qualities."

McGoff said Whelan, presently president and editor of the Hialeah (Fla.) Publishing Company, would assume his new duties at the Company's East Lansing headquarters on August 1.

He said Whelan's primary responsibilities would center on working with the editors of Panax newspapers in order to develop a better flow of news and ideas among them and to and from the Panax bureaus in Lansing, New York and Washington.

"We have a tremendous and largely untapped reservoir of talent," McGoff said, "in the persons of the 400 reporters, editors and writers and photo-journalists on our newspapers."

"Harnessing and channeling all that energy and ability, so that stories and ideas are shared as widely as they ought to be, can only enhance all of our papers. In a similar vein, we need more two-way communication between our papers and bureaus."

McGoff said Whelan also would have direct responsibility for developing an overall editorial personality for the group on national and international issues.

"Such a 'personality,'" McGoff said, "would, of course, in no way relieve our local editors of their responsibility to formulate editorial opinions on the full range of issues, nor impinge on their rightful autonomy."

"Yet we do feel that too many publishers and others in positions of trust and responsibility for newspapers have abdicated the one, essential responsibility: to speak clearly, forcefully and forth-

rightly on issues. Instead, too many have retreated timidly to board rooms and cashier's cages, leaving the arena of ideas to syndicated columnists and hired hands.

"We believe in—and will continue to practice—rugged, independent, local journalism. But we also believe in rugged, independent leadership."

McGoff noted that the past few years have been a time of rapid growth for Panax.

"In 1972, just five years ago," he said, "we published eight dailies and 25 weeklies in 3 states. Now, we publish seven dailies and 43 weeklies in Michigan, Illinois, Florida and Washington, D.C."

"During the early years of our growth, we were fortunate to enjoy the expert guidance of Don Hoenshell as our editorial director. Since Don moved on three years ago to become editor of the *Sacramento (Calif.) Union* (owned by another sister company controlled by McGoff), we have felt the increasing need for another firm hand to assure that we grow in quality as well as in size and number."

Whelan, 44, comes to Panax after a professional career that began 27 years ago as a copy boy on the *Buffalo (N.Y.) Courier-Express*. In the years since, he has climbed through the ranks to just about every level on the journalistic ladder. He also has won numerous honors, including a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard (1966-1967), and the Citation of Excellence of the Overseas Press Club of America.

From the *Courier-Express*, he went to the Buffalo bureau of the United Press International as one of the youngest staff correspondents of the news agency in the country. With two years out for Army service, and one for the Nieman Fellowship, he remained with UPI until 1968, serving in Buffalo, Boston, Providence, New York, Buenos Aires, Caracas and San Juan, as a reporter, editor, news editor, foreign correspondent, bureau manager, country manager and, finally, division manager.

In 1968, he was recruited by International Telephone & Telegraph Company for a newly-created position on the Corporate Relations staff, moving later to line management as Vice President-Operations of ITT Western Hemisphere Directories, a subsidiary with branches throughout Latin America.

He left ITT in 1970 to return to newspapering, as Washington-based Latin America correspondent of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance. It was while with SHNA that he won the OPC award in the category, best reporting on

Latin America, for 1971. In 1971, he joined the *Miami (Fla.) News* as assistant managing editor, and was promoted to Managing Editor the following year. At the end of 1973, he left that newspaper in a dispute between the editor, a close associate, and the newspaper's owners.

For the next two years, he worked as a freelance writer and consultant.

In 1976, together with five partners, he acquired a failing, 32-year-old weekly, the *Home News*, and nourished it back to health. Inasmuch as 63% of the 140,000 inhabitants of Hialeah, the community it serves, are of Hispanic origin, the partners later launched a second, bi-lingual publication, the *Hialeah News/Las Noticias de Hialeah*.

## McGoff to defend news policy at open hearing

National News Council set August 16 for an open hearing on the controversy surrounding the Panax newspaper group and the issue of news control of member newspapers by a group ownership.

The hearing was requested by John McGoff, Panax president. It will be held in the Council offices in New York at Lincoln Plaza.

The Council said other interested parties were also being advised of the hearing. One group notified was the Committee for Responsible Journalism in Escanaba, Mich., which had asked to be represented at any hearing convened.

The controversy brought the firing of one Panax editor in Michigan and the resignation of another.

The issue arose in early June when Panax headquarters in East Lansing, Mich., sent two stories to editors of the chain's papers both critical of President Carter. David Rood, editor of the *Escanaba Daily Press*, refused to run the articles, and was subsequently discharged. Bob Skuggen, editor of the *Marquette Mining Journal*, also protested. He declined to run the first story, rewrote the second. His offer to resign was accepted.

In a later policy statement, McGoff said he had the right "to distribute whatever news copy he deems appropriate and to demand, if necessary, that such copy be printed."

The News Council denounced McGoff's policy as regressive, asserting: "To the Council, the central issue is the relationship of chain ownership to news control. Mr. McGoff has highlighted one of the great underlying public fears about newspaper chains—that what the public reads is directed from afar by autocratic ownership."

In asking for the hearing, McGoff said the News Council action was "misleading." He added that "we would welcome the opportunity to tell its members the truth about what happened."